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ABSTRACT

This selective view of American educational history is intended primarily to demonstrate how educational change has been pursued almost exclusively as a means to the greater efficiency of students, society, or schools. Even as far back as Colonial days, Americans have usually tried to reform schools by increasing their practicality, i.e., their efficiency. Reforms that propose to make schooling a more nurturing experience for children tend to be ignored unless they can also promise higher test scores, better job skills, lower property taxes, or some other measurable efficiency outcome. However, schools are also moral institutions, not because they teach morality or enforce moral behavior, but because they are based on truthfulness (teachers will not falsify the information they are providing; students will not lie about what they know or do not know), value and usefulness (of the material generally and the particular task at hand specifically), and fairness. To ignore the true moral aspects of schooling and focus only on efficiency, or even the creation of moral behavior, is to misinterpret schools entirely. Contains approximately 237 references. (MAH)

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